

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

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WE BID FAREWELL TO OUR READERS

As foreshadowed in recent numbers of *Spiritual Issues*, the time has come to bid farewell to our many readers in Britain, in different parts of the Empire, in the United States of America and in many other parts of the world. Many of them have written to express gratitude for what has been done, and for such expressions of gratitude we would like to return our own thanks.

It may be interesting to review very briefly what has been attempted in these columns.

The bulletin began in 1939, and at that time was published in two quite different editions, one for home and one for overseas readers. Later it was decided to combine the two publications in *The Spiritual Issues of the War*.

Spiritual Issues filled a place in war-time literature mainly because it was able to provide a steady stream of information, particularly on the Nazi attitude to religion, and on the resistance of the Churches to the Nazis on the continent of Europe. Perhaps we may say that *Spiritual Issues* was the main source of information on these two subjects for a long period during the war, when conditions were such that information was difficult to obtain except through official channels. The interest in Continental Christianity aroused in Britain through the story of the resistance of the Continental Churches has been a potent factor in the launching of the appeal for Christian reconstruction in Europe about which some information is given elsewhere in this bulletin.

As the war proceeded the work of the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information was directed more and more to the dissemination of news about Britain, and a consequent change occurred in the contents of the bulletin. Whereas previously it had contained mainly foreign news it turned its at-

tention to news about British religious life in war-time and particularly about Church plans for reconstruction. We have, however, endeavoured to give space for really important news from liberated countries so that those who were looking to *Spiritual Issues* for such information should continue to receive it as long as *Spiritual Issues* appeared.

A prominent feature of the leaflet has been an attempt to provide documentary information, i.e., *verbatim* accounts of speeches, pastoral letters and sermons. In an official publication comment was not desirable except in so far as some background information was occasionally necessary. Our object has been to provide information, and we are sure that it is the objective information which has been most appreciated by our readers.

It only remains for us now to thank our readers for the attention with which they have followed this publication. Its compilation and its distribution would not have been possible without a great deal of co-operation between official and non-official bodies. Our hope is that those who have welcomed the paper may discover other journals for which they can subscribe and by means of which they can keep in touch with British life and thought.

If we may venture to make one or two suggestions we would include the following:—

A. Regular weekly newspapers covering Anglican and Free Church interests.

B. *The Christian Newsletter* (annual subscription 12s. 6d., 6s. 6d. for six months. Single copies 6d.; reduction for quantities). Address: 20, Balcombe Street, Dorset Square, London, N.W.1. This is published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Christian Frontier Council, and edited by Kathleen Bliss. It is obtainable in America

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30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

and Canada for \$3 from the office of *Christianity and Crisis*.

C. The Church and the World.

This is a publication of the British Council of Churches (58, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1). It is not at present obtainable by subscription, but it is believed that enquires about it, or about Co-operative Christian work in Britain will be dealt with by the British Council of Churches as adequately as their limited staff permits.

D. Readers needing news of foreign churches are reminded of the "International Christian Press and Information Service". Particulars can be obtained from the World Council of Churches, c/o 58 Bloomsbury St. London, W.C.1.

The British Information Services will be willing to give preliminary advice and help if readers wish for it in the matter of selecting and subscribing for British journals. They cannot, however, undertake to handle the subscriptions themselves; these should be either sent direct to the publishers concerned, or placed through a local bookseller.

PROGRESS OF BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN EUROPE

"Christian Reconstruction in Europe" reports as follows:

The response to the suggestion made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in association with the leaders of other Churches that the VE-Day collections should be given to Christian Reconstruction in Europe has been both widespread and generous.

It is not yet possible to estimate the total amount, but the Board of Finance has received contributions on account from nine dioceses totalling more than £12,000. (\$48,000).

A total of more than £30,000 (\$120,000) has either been already received at the Central Office of C.R.E. or reported to it as being in hand at various centres. Of this sum £27,000 (\$108,000) is unearmarked, and the remaining sum earmarked either for various countries, notably Holland, Norway and Greece, or for various denominations, e.g. Old Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant. It seems probable that when the total amount of the VE-Day collections is known it will be more than double the present figure.

Collections were taken at services held not only in cathedrals and in churches large and small, but in cinemas, warships, a Union Castle liner, hospitals, private houses, public halls and in the open air.

Many have come from units of all three Services. A U.S.A. chaplain brought in 103 one pound notes. Generous collections have been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force. Many have come from the B.L.A. in Germany and Holland, including one from Luneberg. Among other places abroad from which collections have been received are Quebec Cathedral, English churches at Stockholm, Lausanne, Territal-Moubreux and Beirut, a hospital at Achimota and a group of missionaries at Sierra Leone.

Their Majesties the King and Queen have graciously sent a joint personal donation.

Field-Marshal Montgomery sends with his donation a message "wishing every success in carrying on the great work of the Reconstruction of Churches throughout Europe which have suffered such serious damage in the war."

Among other individual donations are one from a lady in France in gratitude for her escape from the Gestapo, another in gratitude for the preservation of Oxford during the war. A nurse sent her month's salary cheque. A member of Pastor Niemoeller's congregation sent a gift in gratitude for his release. A rector of a small village writes that "Out of a population of 125, 80 were present at the VE-Service and contributed."

Meanwhile more accurate information as to the immense needs of the European churches is all the time being received at Geneva, and in this country, and it is clear that there should be no relaxation of the splendid efforts which British churches are making to come to their assistance.

For the benefit of those who like to earmark their contributions it may be added that much more money will be required for the assistance of Orthodox countries than for the Old Catholics for whom generous contributions have already been earmarked.

The Committee also will gladly forward to the Roman Catholic authorities any money received from those who would like to contribute to the Archbishop of Westminster's appeal for Catholic relief abroad.

The first of 25 libraries of 50 English books published during the war was presented at Lambeth Palace to the Metropolitan Nikolai Krutitsky, head of the Russian Church Delegation. Six others have already been sent to the Continent. Each book contains a book plate with the words:

"From the Christian people of Great Britain in Friendship and Gratitude."

It is hoped to assemble more, and perhaps larger, libraries in the near future when these first 25 have been distributed.

GERMAN CONFESSIONAL CHURCH— PRESENT POSITION

The *Union Seminary Review* (Richmond, Virginia) carries an article entitled "The Confessional Church in Germany." It is by the Rev. Wolfgang Schweitzer, a young German theologian who has been in Germany throughout the war but who escaped to the Allied lines, and who has been co-operating with Allied authorities in various ways.

The article is in the main an historic account of the rise of the Confessional Church in Germany and its record during the war. It concludes, however, with a section on "The Present Situation," and we think our readers might like to see this. Its appearance in these columns does not, of course, imply any agreement or disagreement with any views expressed by the author.

Readers might like to note that the author is the son of the Rev. Dr. C. G. Schweitzer of the Wistow Training Centre for Post-War Christian Service.

The Present Situation

"The situation today is as follows: There are two Churches, Mecklenburg and Thuringia, which are as before under 'German Christian' leadership. These 'Thüringer Deutsche Christen' have been taking a new line of propaganda to those parts of Germany where the old 'German Christian' movement broke down. They are holding their own services. Sometimes, as, for instance, in Bavaria, they leave the official Church and are, in other words, supporters of the schism.

"Secondly, there are, particularly in Prussia and Saxonia, large areas which may be considered more or less devastated Church regions. Relatively fertile ground is found in Prussia in the Provinces of Westphalia and Rhineland, since there the official Church authorities (Konsistorien) decided, for practical purposes, to co-operate with the Confessing Church (the former 'German Christian' Bishop Adler has naturally long since left). The only obstacle there is really the Finance Division.

"Finally to be listed are the 'Intakte Landeskirchen,' the provincial Churches which have kept their original constitution: Bavaria, Württemberg and Hanover. Here the 'German Christians' were completely excluded by the official Church. Where necessary they emigrated to Thuringia or Mecklenburg or left the Church. On the other hand, many Confessing Church ministers from other regions where the Church was under stronger Nazi control emigrated, particularly to Württemberg. That was possible because even the Gestapo usually limited speech

and residence prohibitions for certain districts of Germany. From the Württemberg-Landes-bishop Dr. Wurm came also a new unification attempt, which was to prepare the future organization and common ideological basis for Protestant Churches in Germany. In contrast to Hymmen's 'Geistlichem Vertrauensrat' (with the 'German Christian' Bishops of Mecklenburg), this unification attempt of Wurm excluded all 'German Christians.' In this work almost all Councils of Brethren and 'Intakte Landeskirchen' have become co-workers. We are hoping that the right ground work was laid here for reconstruction after the war.

"I hope that this information will contribute to an objective judgment of Protestant Christians in Germany. They have had to suffer more than is known to most within Germany as well as abroad. Niemoeller was by no means alone in his stand. Since 1937, as far as I know, never fewer than fifty ministers were under arrest at any one time; generally there were never less than a hundred in various jails and concentration camps. A number of them perished during their confinement. In spite of much suffering we are still grateful that God has granted us life during these times. It is a time during which our Church has been cleared of deadwood. We are sure that only a Confessing Church has the promise that 'the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.'"

FAR-REACHING PROPOSALS IN REPORT OF ARCHBISHOPS' COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM

Far-reaching proposals, including the use of newspaper advertising on a great scale for evangelism, are contained in a Report entitled "Towards the Conversion of England," recently published by the Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 2, Great Peter Street, Westminster, S.W.1.

This Report, which presents "a plan dedicated to the memory of Archbishop William Temple," is the Final Report of the Commission on Evangelism appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, pursuant to a Resolution of the Church Assembly passed in 1943. It may well prove, in its effects, to be one of the most important religious books published this century. It urges that the state of the Christian religion in this country calls for nothing less than "the conversion of England to the Christian faith," and it makes recommendations which may change the emphasis of a great deal of the life, work and organization of the Church of England from pastoral to evangelistic objects.

The terms of reference to the Commission instructed them

"To survey the whole problem of modern evangelism with special reference to the spiritual needs and prevailing intellectual outlook of the non-worshipping members of the community, and to report on the organization and methods by which such needs can most effectively be met."

In their survey the Commission emphasize the difficulties of the religious approach to the modern English mind so largely educated in the sceptical temper appropriate to science in its own sphere; and the still greater difficulties in the approach to the "large section of our people" who are "*mechanically*, rather than *scientifically*, educated" and whose mentality has been diagnosed by a well-known psychologist as "definitely lacking in the necessary apperception for apprehending abstract ideas." As a result, the Commission observe that

"Evangelism, before it can gain an intelligent hearing, is confronted with the prior task of stimulating into activity, among a large section of the non-worshipping members of the community, mental powers which have been allowed to atrophy. Hence, the contention of the Bishop of Carlisle that 'for a revival of religion there is needed a great rebirth of poetry and of the highest literature.'"

Elsewhere the Commission observe that "in England the Church has to present the Christian Gospel to multitudes in every section of society who believe in nothing; who have lost a whole dimension (the spiritual dimension) of life; and for whom life has no ultimate meaning. The paramount spiritual need of the non-worshipping members of the community (as evidenced by this survey) is the recovery of their consciousness of God. Only so can they regain a doctrine of man morally responsible to God, and a philosophy of life that sees the material world as the sacrament of the realities of the Eternal. But the Church is ill-equipped for its unparalleled task and opportunity."

The Commission emphasize the view that without the participation of the laity in evangelistic work the conversion of England is impossible. They make many suggestions for the training of evangelists and for the better training of the clergy in preaching (the standard of which is described as "deplorably low") and in the conduct of discussion groups on the lines of the "padre's hour."

The Report emphasizes that "marriage presents the parish priest with, perhaps, the

greatest evangelistic opportunity of all"; and that "no preparation for marriage is adequate which does not appeal for decision for Christ, as the only sound foundation for married life."

An important section of the Report is devoted to modern agencies of propaganda including the Cinema, Drama, Radio, Television, Press, Literature, Christian information and publicity centres, and advertising; and a large use of all the special media is advocated.

In connection with advertising it is noted that

"In the advertisement columns of the Press we have a vehicle for a modern form of tract. By it a message can be carried into almost every household over and over again, and in ways whereby the millions of readers must eventually see it and grasp something of its meaning."

It is noted what large sums various Government departments have spent on Press and postal advertising, the Ministry of Food alone having spent something in the region of £500,000 (\$2,000,000) a year, and even more having been spent in the Savings Campaign. The Commission observe that an evangelistic campaign for the re-conversion of England is of infinitely greater importance than these and they are advised that the cost of a first Five Years' Campaign "should develop to the rate of about £200,000 (\$800,000) a year." They also observe "that the provision of money required to meet the cost of such a continuous integrating and developing effort in evangelism would be a matter for prayer and careful consideration from all points of view. In such consideration, account would naturally be taken of the truth that the necessary financial support is never lacking where spiritual advance is being made." They urge that "the Church of England is the expected leader if the Church in general is to launch out in this and similar great ventures of evangelism on a national scale."

The holding of parochial conventions, and the setting up of diocesan evangelistic organizations and of a Central Council for evangelism are recommended; and as an interim measure the Commission "recommend that as a matter of urgency, pending the carrying into effect of the organization we shall suggest, and for the avoidance of an immediate call on Assembly Funds, the Press and Publications Board be requested, as a temporary measure, to set up an organization on the lines of its Press Sub-Committee with a view to making effective use of special agencies of publicity."



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